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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/523,301	08/04/2005	Jonathan Hughes	IA/3-22334/PCT	7941
324 7590 03/18/2008				
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EXAMINER				
HRUSKOCI, PETER A				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
1797				
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**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

### Office Action Summary

**Application No.**

10/523,301

**Applicant(s)**

HUGHES ET AL.

**Examiner**

Peter A. Hruskoci

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --  
**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 04 August 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-19 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-19 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☒ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SF/ICE)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 4/29/05
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities: In the specification on page 1 “aluminium”, on page 2 “aNational”, and on page 12 “contact18” are erroneous.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claims 1-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. In claim 1 “assisted by a treatment system” is vague and indefinite because it is unclear how this term further limits the claim. In claim 5 “the low IV polymer”, in claims 8 and 9 “the high IV polymer”, in claims 10 and 11 “the coagulant and high IV polymer”, in claim 14 “the dose of high IV polymer”, and in claim 16 “the mechanical dewatering step” lack clear antecedent basis. Claims 2-4, 6-10, and 12-19 depend from the above claims.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-3, 13, 17, and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Brink 5,536,325 in view of the Minowa et al. publication “The Characteristics Of Dewatering Ethanol Fermentation Stillage”. Brink disclose (see col. 5 line 38 through col. 6 line 60 and col. 9 line 11 through col. 11 line 34) a process for separating suspended solids from a fermentation liquor substantially as claimed. It is submitted that the liquor removed from the distillation stage in Brink would comprise water, lignin and BOD. The claims differ from Brink by reciting the use of a specific treatment system in the separation stage. Minowa et al. disclose (see Abstract) that it is known in the art to add cationic and anionic polymeric coagulants to aid

in dewatering ethanol fermentation stillage. It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to modify the process of Brink by utilizing the recited treatment system in view of the teachings of Minowa et al., to aid in dewatering solids in the separation stage. The use of the separation stage prior to the distillation stage, and the specific dose of coagulant utilized, would have been an obvious matter of process optimization, depending on the specific liquor treated and results desired, absent a sufficient showing of unexpected results.

Claims 4-6, 8-12, and 14-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Brink 5,536,325 in view of the Minowa et al. publication "The Characteristics Of Dewatering Ethanol Fermentation Stillage" as above, and further in view of Hughes et al. 6,967,085. The claims differ from the references as applied above by reciting the treatment system includes specific polymers and coagulants. Hughes et al. disclose (see col. 1 lines 16-60, and col. 3 line 33 through col. 7 line 38) that it is known in the art to add the recited polymers and coagulants to aid in flocculating and separating cell or solid material from fermentation broths. It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to modify the references as applied above, by utilizing the recited polymers and coagulants in view of the teachings of Hughes et al., to aid in dewatering solids in the separation stage. The specific intrinsic viscosities and dose utilized, would have been an obvious matter of process optimization, depending on the specific liquor treated and results desired, absent a sufficient showing of unexpected results. With regard to claims 15 and 16, it is submitted that Hughes et al. as applied above, disclose the use of centrifuge or filter in the separation stage or step.

Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Brink 5,536,325 in view of the Minowa et al. publication "The Characteristics Of Dewatering Ethanol Fermentation

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Stillage” as above, and further in view of Moffett 6,132,625. The claim differs from the references as applied above by reciting that the coagulant is a charged microparticulate material. Moffett disclose (see col. 3 line 3 through col. 6 line 39) that it is known in the art to add a flocculating agents and anionic microgels, to aid in flocculating biosolids present in aqueous streams from distilleries including sugars and carbohydrates. It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to modify the references as applied above by addition of the recited microparticulate material in view of the teachings of Moffett, to aid in dewatering solids in the separation stage.

Claim 18 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Brink 5,536,325 in view of the Minowa et al. publication “The Characteristics Of Dewatering Ethanol Fermentation Stillage” as above, and further in view of Chieffalo et al. 5,975,439. The claim differs from the references as applied above by reciting that the dewatered solids are subjected to a drying stage and used as solid fuel. Chieffalo et al. disclose (see col. 6 lines 40-64 and col. 36 lines 18-55) that it is known in the art to dewater and dry solids including lignin, and utilize the solids as a fuel. It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to modify the references as applied above by utilizing the recited drying stage in view of the teachings of Chieffalo, to aid in producing a fuel from the dewatered solids.

The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the “right to exclude” granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. A nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting rejection is appropriate where the conflicting claims are not identical, but at least one examined application claim is not patentably distinct from the reference claim(s) because the examined application claim is either anticipated by, or would have been obvious over, the reference claim(s). See, e.g., *In re Berg*, 140 F.3d 1428, 46 USPQ2d 1226 (Fed. Cir. 1998); *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re*

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*Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and *In re Thornton*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) or 1.321(d) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent either is shown to be commonly owned with this application, or claims an invention made as a result of activities undertaken within the scope of a joint research agreement.

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

Claims 1-19 are provisionally rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-23 of copending Application No. 10/587,582 and claims 1-22 of copending Application No. 10/587,583. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because the process steps recited in the instant claims appear to be fully encompassed by the claims of the copending applications, respectively.

This is a provisional obviousness-type double patenting rejection because the conflicting claims have not in fact been patented.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Peter A. Hruskoci whose telephone number is (571) 272-1160. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday from 8:00AM-5:00PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Duane Smith can be reached on (571) 272-1166. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Peter A. Hruskoci/  
Primary Examiner  
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3/12/08